



N° 267. SATURDAY, August 14, 1731.

To CALEB D'ANVERS, Esq;
SIR,

HO' I agree with you in what I perceive to be the Opinion of most of your Readers, that your Discourses ought chiefly to turn on the Merit of *Facts*, not of *Names*, and therefore that all personal Enquiries should be avoided; yet I cannot help thinking that there are some Cases, where it may not only be very justifiable to examine into the *private Characters* of Men, but even necessary to apprise the Publick of them. The People have undoubtedly as just a Right to enquire into and be inform'd of the *private Virtues* and *Vices* of the Person, who is intrusted with the Care of their *Liberty* and *Property*, as any Gentleman can have to demand a Character of the *Steward*, who is to manage his Estate. We know by History, we feel by daily Experience, how much *private Passions* influence *publick Actions*. If a Man is covetous, cruel, timorous, dissolute, immoral, insincere and unjust in *private Life*; it may, without Breach of Charity, be presumed that some of these Vices will stick to his *publick Character*. We cannot imagine the Change of his Condition will change his Manners. On the contrary, *Power* and *Wealth* frequently furnish Men with Means to indulge their Passions; and if a bad Heart commonly prevails over a sound Head, what will it not do over an unsound one? As the Power of doing Mischief increases, the Inclination to do it is not likely to abate, and the Opportunity of doing evil will not

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make evil Men better. He, who is by Nature of a presumptuous and revengeful Temper, will be enraged at all Opposition to his Measures; will endeavour to overbear and pursue with the utmost Efforts of Malice and arbitrary Power Those, who dare to think and act honestly in Contradiction to Him.

If a Man should, upon his first Entrance into Business, swallow greedily a *Bribe* from a *poor Forage Contractor*, can we imagine he will neglect any Opportunity, when he rises higher, of making *corrupt* and *rich Bargains for Himself*, and dealing for Millions with *Money Companies*?

The Man, who has so little Possession of himself as to tremble and be frightened out of his Understanding at the Receipt of a *Penny-post Letter*, in his private Capacity, may be weak enough, from his natural Fears, to alarm a Nation in his *publick Character* with groundless Apprehensions and Fears of *Plots* and *Invasions*, without any solid Foundation, and contrary to all Reason and common Sense.

A Coward in private Life may be a Bully in publick. He may suffer a brave People to be injur'd and insulted, by daring to provoke, and not daring to resent the Affronts he receives.

The Spendthrift of his *private Fortune* will probably be profuse of the *publick Treasure*; and the *corrupt Man* will, from the Information of his own bad *Heart*, imagine *Corruption* to be the only Expedient of Government.

He, who is false and insincere in private Life, will have little Regard to *national Faith*, and he will certainly break through the most solemn Engagements, as often as his particular Interest shall require it. In short, He, who in private Life hath no Regard to Truth, Honour, Decency, or any virtuous and gentlemanlike Qualification, will in his publick Character act in Contradiction to all these Virtues and, as the Measure of

his Guilt increases and fills up, he will grow desperate, and risque every Thing to secure Himself.

From these Enquiries therefore into the private Manners of Those, who may hereafter preside over the Publick, we may learn in Time to oppose and give Check to their Measures; to mark them out and keep a watchful Eye over all their Proceedings; and as Allowances are always to be made to the Errors of those Ministers, who act upon honest Principles and with good Intentions, the constant Tenor of whose Actions in private Life hath always been virtuous and uniform; so none ought to be made to Those of a contrary Character. They ought not to have the common Plea of Accidents, or Vicissitude of Affairs.

The trifling Advocates of a weak Administration, whenever you mention pernicious Measures, always call upon you for the Proof of them. *You are not, say They, to accuse in general Terms; give us special Instances, and prove them too.* How are they to be proved, but as you have proved them? Do they expect you should exhibit *formal Articles of Impeachment* in a Journal? But suppose you should; suppose you have produced *Evidence*, such undeniable Evidence of *Male-Administration* as must have already satisfied all Men but Those, who are resolved not to be satisfied; will That be allow'd? No. What Proof would They have then of the Crimes laid to his Charge? his *own Confession*; the *Confession of his Guilt*. This is indeed the only Proof They have ever offer'd of his Virtues.

Is there any Proof wanting of the many unjust and inhuman Barbarities committed by the *Spaniards* on our Merchants in the *West Indies*? Is there any Doubt that the Port and Harbour of *Dunkirk* have been open'd and repair'd, in Violation of Treaties? Have not Works been carried on before *Gibraltar*, to render the Possession of that important Fortress useless and precarious? Are we to prove that the People labour under *heavy Taxes*? Are we to make Oath of the declining Condition

tion of our *Trade* and our *Manufactures*? How are our Poor increased? Is there no complaining in our Streets? What other Proofs, alas, do the Unhappy want of the Miseries they suffer, than the Pains they feel? Under whose Administration hath all This happen'd? Is This a Doubt? Who is the Man, that hath assumed all *Power* and *Authority*, and *Profit* to himself? Who hath affected, and does still affect, in the most haughty and invidious Manner, to be *foremost, single and alone*, not only in the *Appearances*, but in the *Realities of Power*? He hath indeed found out a Distinction; and, ridiculous as it is, he hath offer'd it as an Excuse for his Mismanagements. Is the *C—r* of the *E—r*, says He, to answer for Omissions, or Faults, not in his Office? Is he blameable for the Misdemeanors of *Others*? Yes surely the *C—r* of the *E—r*, when he assumes the *Power of first Minister*, when he will execute every Man's Office, and suffer no Share in the Administration, nor permit any thing to be done but by his Advice and under his immediate Direction, is, and ought to be answerable. If he acted only as *C—r* of the *E—r*, he could be accountable for nothing but what related to his Department. But the Case is quite otherwise. Part of the Preamble to the Articles of Impeachment against the late Earl of *Oxford* was that *He, having assumed to himself the Power of first Minister*, was chargeable with several Articles in that Impeachment, in which *He* could have had no Concern, *if He had not been first Minister*; and therefore as he took upon himself the *whole Administration*, he was with great Justice and Reason to be accountable for whatever was done amiss in any Part of it, since he undertook for, and monopolized the whole.

Tony Aston is a Monopolizer of this Kind; he plays all Characters; he fills none; he is the whole Comedy in his single Person; he receives, indeed, the Salary of proper Actors, and This is poor *Tony's* only View; for

his Plea is Necessity ; he confesses his Inability to sustain so many Parts, and picks your Pocket of half a Crown, with some Appearance of Modesty ; but if he should enter with the Air of a *Drawcansir*, and swear that He alone was fit to represent every Character, that He alone was fit to receive all the Pay, and that he would never permit any one else to tread the Stage, I think he would be his'd by the People. — An Actor should never let himself sufficiently appear ; it lessens his real Merit ; but when he assumes what he is utterly incapable of performing, He becomes contemptible and ridiculous.

But to return to the Arguments of Those, who intend to defend a *bad Administration* ; You have often (say They) brought a general Accusation of the Crime of Peculation ; of embezzling the publick Money ; but you have never yet offer'd one Proof. This every one must see likewise is impossible to be done by you, so as to make what would amount to a legal Conviction ; but you have given such circumstantial Evidence as leaves no manner of Doubt in our Minds of the Truth of the Charge. Proofs have in a proper Place been constantly demanded, and constantly refused ; That is, Papers necessary to these Proofs have been often call'd for, where Gentlemen have a right to call for them, and they have been always refused. Now, tho' such a one may be in the right not to furnish Arms against himself ; let him not boast That in his Defence, or alledge That as an Argument of his Innocence, which is a Proof of his Guilt. What should we say to a great Offender, who, after he had committed many and notorious Crimes, fled to *Sanctuary* ; and, while he laid hold on the Horns of the Altar, cry'd aloud to his Accusers, *I am not guilty ; I defy you ; punish me if you can ?* The Man may be safe ; but I am as little satisfied with his Innocence as his Modesty. I see he hath avoided publick Punishment ; but the Refuge he hath taken is surely a circumstantial Proof of his Guilt.

When

When *Cato*, in the midst of his little Senate, (a glorious Minority!) sent that memorable Message to *Caesar*,

“ Bid him disband his Legions,

“ And stand the Judgment of a ROMAN Senate,

The great Patriot did not believe he would quit the Sanctuary of his Majority, and stand upon the Basis of his *Virtue*; but he meant to shew, in the fullest Light, that this very Asylum he had taken was a Proof of his Crimes.

For these Reasons, *Sir*, you see, when they call upon you for other Proofs than what you have already given, they talk idly and unreasonably.

But let us go a little farther with these *awkard, ministerial Triflers*, who always swear in the Words of their *Master*; let us be so complaisant to their Complaints and their Invectives, as to allow that in Case we should ever have a *bad Administration*, this Manner of writing might raise a terrible Opposition, and that it must be occasion'd by Envy, Ambition, or Malice. Yet I am of Opinion that, in a free Country, Opposition to a *Minister*, or a *Ministry*, never did Harm to the Society. It will keep a *good Administration* on a continual Guard. It will cause them to walk warily; to dispose the *publick Money* frugally and honestly; and fix and direct all their Measures and Views to the *publick Honour and Profit*; and accordingly their Schemes will be only form'd for the *Good of the People in general*, for whose Sake, Welfare and Security, as I conceive, all Government was first founded. But if an Opposition should arise against a *bad Minister*, then it would be terrible.—Terrible! To whom? To the Man, who *does Evil*; to the Man, who would overrun all Things, confound Heaven and Earth, attempt or execute any Thing to defend Himself and his *ill-gotten Wealth*,

Wealth, to secure Himself from the Punishment due to his *Crimes*.

But some might say, (and Those too, who may not be his Friends ; who may own he is both *weak* and *wicked*) Who have forced Him to this desperate Extremity ? Who have made it absolutely unsafe for him to quit ? Who have driven him into *Sanctuary* ? — I answer, his *Folly*, his *Ambition*, his *Avarice*, his *Profusion*, his *obstinate Perseverance in a long Course of Iniquity*, may have driven him thither, and may keep him there. A *wicked Man*, such a one as we have imagined, may go on from Crime to Crime, and from Error to Error, 'till He finds it dangerous to descend. *Bos Johnson* makes *Cataline* say,

“ The Crimes, that I have done, cannot be safe,
“ But by attempting greater. —

This would, indeed, be a most deplorable Station both for *Him* and the *Publick* ; but it surely behoves all Men, who wish well to the Society, to do what is in their Power, if ever such a *bad Servant to the Publick* should appear, to bring him to Justice.

To conclude. There are a Sort of *Hirelings*, who constantly give the Merit in general of every Thing, which they pretend to be beneficial to the *Publick*, to their *Patron*, not allowing any Thing even to the *Crown* ; and yet when you call upon them to name any one particular national Point, any one *publick Benefit*, the Merit of which can with any Propriety, or Justice, be ascribed to *Him*, have they ever ventur'd to mention one ? Thus, *Sir*, tho' they complain, without the least Shadow of Truth, that you have never proved any Part of a *certain Person's Administration* to be bad, they very prudently declin'd giving one Instance where it is good. The best then, that you should pretend to say of it is, that it is a very indifferent one.

R.

I am, SIR, &c.

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